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**Pajarito  
Group**

*Rio Grande Chapter, The Sierra Club*

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March 15, 2000*

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Walla Walla District  
210 North Third Avenue  
Walla Walla, WA 99362-1876

Attention: Lower Snake River Study

Subject: Lower Snake River Salmon Migration Feasibility Report and Environmental  
Impact Statement

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the 450 members of the Pajarito Group of the Sierra Club I would like to comment on the Draft Lower Snake River Salmon Migration Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Thank you for the opportunity to do so. Please include our comments as part of the public record.

Our membership is deeply concerned about the potential for the survival of the Chinook salmon on the Snake River. Scientific data, and the experience of many native and traditional peoples dependent upon the salmon migration, implicate one major cause: manmade dams on the Columbia and Lower Snake Rivers. The data and personal experiences are clear: the dams prevent migration of salmon in sufficient numbers to ensure their survival. The dams impose two migratory restrictions: they delay migration of young salmon to the sea and they create obstacles to adult salmon returning to spawn. Recovery efforts to improve migration, costing \$3 billion to date, have failed; the likelihood of success in the near future is improbable.

Studies by the National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State and Tribal fisheries agencies, and independent scientific committees have all reached the same conclusion - dam removal must be the cornerstone of any salmon recovery strategy. Removing four dams on the Lower Snake River in Washington must be part of the Snake River salmon and steelhead recovery strategy.

We support dam removal as described in the Lower Snake River Salmon Migration Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement for the following reasons:

1. Dam removal is less costly than other options: it is estimated that removing dams is far less costly than other salmon recovery options, including new restrictions on farmers, loggers, and commercial fishermen. Acquiring water from irrigators to rush young salmon to the sea could cost more than \$1 billion and eliminate more than 6,000 farming jobs;

2. Dam removal will create new jobs: it is estimated that restoring the Lower Snake River would create more than 3,100 recreation-related jobs and generate more than \$200 million in annual economic benefits;
3. The National Marine Fisheries Service estimates that further delay significantly increases the risk of extinction for endangered Snake River salmon;
4. According to Congressman Tom Udall (D-NM) the United States has treaty obligations to Canada and Native American Indians. We are morally obligated to uphold our commitments. Should Canada or the tribes contest the treaties, it is estimated that attorney fees, potential damage awards and/or a settlement based upon failing to maintain a viable salmon population that supports substantial commercial and recreational fishing could exceed \$10 billion. We believe such monies would be better spent removing the dams and ensuring the salmon's survival.

In conclusion we urge you to recommend dam removal in the Final Lower Snake River Salmon Migration Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement. Furthermore, we encourage you to begin removal of the dams as soon as possible. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Michael G. Smith  
Chair, Conservation Committee

Cc: Federal Caucus Comment Record  
President Bill Clinton  
Vice-President Al Gore  
Senator Slade Gorton  
Senator Patty Murray  
Senator Pete Domenici  
Senator Jeff Bingaman